

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 719
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 2286

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MASS, KU, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH DISAPPOINTMENT OVER FAILURE OF BRITISH PATROL
BOAT SALE TO KUWAIT

REF: KUWAIT 2012 (051022Z APRIL 78)

1. CONSELOR OF FRENCH EMBASSY EXPRESSED ACUTE DISAPPOINTMENT
TO EMBOFF APRIL 15 OVER KUWAITI FAILURE TO SIGN CONTRACT
WITH VOSPER-THORNEYCROFT FOR 10 MISSILE-EQUIPPED PATROL
CRAFT. HE NOTED THAT FRENCH FIRMS HAD STOOD TO GAIN
SUBSTANTIAL PROFITS FROM SALE OF EXOCET MISSILES AND FIRE
CONTROL SYSTEMS FOR THESE BOATS AND HE ASSERTED THAT THE
FRENCH AMBASSADOR HERE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A CLEAR EXPLAN-
ATION OF WHY THE GOK HAD CHANGED ITS MIND. IT WAS ALSO
COUNSELOR'S IMPRESSION THAT THE GOK WAS NO LONGER
INTERESTED IN COMBATANTE III, THE VESSEL WHICH HAD BEEN
UNSUCCESSFULLY OFFERED TO THE KUWAITIS LAST YEAR, BUT
INSTEAD WANTED FIVE SMALLER, LESS SOPHISTICATED VESSELS OF
AS YET UNKNOWN TYPE.

2. BRITISH EMBASSY SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE KUWAITIS ARE
THINKING IN TERMS OF TWO "TRAINING SHIPS," BUT THE
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BRITISH HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IT WILL BE MONTHS BEFORE THE
GOK HAS DEFINED ITS REQUIREMENTS FOR THESE. SAME SOURCE
OPINES THAT THREE ADDITIONAL CRAFT MIGHT BE PURCHASED
LATER FOR PATROL DUTY, FOR TOTAL OF FIVE VESSELS.

3. OUR OWN LATEST INFORMATION IS THAT THE CURRENT
THINKING AMONG THOSE WHO ARE CONTEMPLATING A NAVY FOR

KUWAIT IS ALONG RELATIVELY MODEST LINES-- A SMALL COASTAL PATROL FORCE RATHER THAN A SOPHISTICATED MISSILE-EQUIPPED 10 PATROL BOAT NAVY. THIS WAS THE CONCEPT ORIGINALLY ENVISIONED FOR KUWAIT BY THE 1972 DOD STUDY ON KUWAITI MILITARY REQUIREMENTS. WE VIEW THE CONCEPT AS MORE REALISTIC AND IN LINE WITH KUWAITI CAPABILITIES, AND WE ASSUME THAT THE DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE NO POLICY OBJECTION TO US FIRMS BEING INVOLVED IN COMMERCIAL VESSEL SALES WHEN SITUATION HERE REACHES THAT STAGE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE CURRENT APPROACH IS TO PURCHASE TWO OR THREE VESSELS OF A TYPE ALREADY IN PRODUCTION, RATHER THAN ORDERING "CUSTOM MADE" BOATS. THESE WOULD NOT BE MISSILE EQUIPPED BUT WOULD HAVE ANTI-AIRCRAFT AND DECK GUNS.

4. REGARDING THE TIMING OF RENEWED OFFICIAL KUWAITI INTEREST IN PATROL CRAFT PROCUREMENT, IT APPEARS THAT THE GOK WILL NOT ASK FOR PROPOSALS NOR BE READY TO RECEIVE THEM FOR AT LEAST SEVERAL MONTHS. KEY PERSONNEL ARE NOW (OR WILL BE) IN TRAINING IN THE UK, US AND EGYPT, AND GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING SLOWS PERCEPTIBLY DURING THE SUMMER. ALSO, PROCUREMENT PLANS WILL HAVE TO BE FIRMED UP BY THE SMALL NAVY STAFF AND APPROVED BY SEVERAL HIGHER LEVELS. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT US BOAT BUILDERS AND WEAPONS FIRMS WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE A RENEWED OPPORTUNITY TO COMPETE FOR A PATROL CRAFT SALE TO KUWAIT. WE WILL ALERT THE DEPARTMENT WHEN THIS SITUATION

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DEVELOPS.
MAESTRONE

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